TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

# THE LAST RONIN

IDW
ISSUE TWO

EASTMAN | LAIRD | WALTZ | ESCORZA | BISHOP | DELGADO

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

# THE LAST RONIN

STORY KEVIN EASTMAN, PETER LAIRD & TOM WALTZ

SCRIPT TOM WALTZ & KEVIN EASTMAN

LAYOUTS KEVIN EASTMAN PENCILS/INKS ESAU & ISAAC ESCORZA

BEN BISHOP, AND KEVIN EASTMAN COLOR ASSISTANCE SAMUEL PLATA

COLORS LUIS ANTONIO DELGADO LETTERS SHAWN LEE

ADDITIONAL EDITORIAL COORDINATION R. G. LLARENA

EDITS BOBBY CURNOW

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# THE LAST RONIN

## PART 2

## "FIRST TO FALL"

THEN.

TE'S PIZZA!

BLEECKER ST

11TH ST

2ND TIME Around
ANTIQUES & MORE

WHAT THE HECK'S *TAKING* THEM SO LONG?

CASEY, YOU TOLD THEM **6:30 SHARP**, RIGHT? EVERYTHING'S GETTING COLD!

RELAX, APRIL. YOU KNOW GETTIN' FROM THE LAIR TO ANYWHERE IS **ALWAYS** A PAIN IN THE BUTT.

BUT ALL THIS **FOOD**--

IS **FINE**, BABE. I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT SCREWIN' UP THE **TOAST** LATER.

ARE YOU NERVOUS TO **TELL** THEM?

SORTA. BUT THEY'RE **FAMILY**.

STILL CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SAID **YES**.

WELL, I USED TO THINK I'D END UP MARRYING YOU OUT OF **PITY**. THEN I COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO ASK ME.

TOOK YOU **LONG** ENOUGH!

SORRY 'BOUT THAT.

IT'S JUST, THE STREETS NEVER REALLY SHOWED ME HOW TO CARE ABOUT ANYTHING BUT MYSELF FOR MOST OF MY LIFE.

WHICH SOUNDS STUPID NOW, 'CAUSE I WOULDN'T EVEN **HAVE** A LIFE IF WASN'T FOR YOU... AND THE GUYS.

SPEAKIN' OF, YOU'RE RIGHT-- THEY'RE TAKIN' **WAY** TOO LONG TO GET HERE. I'M STARVIN'.

I KNOW-- IT'S NOT LIKE THEM AT ALL.

I'LL CALL DONNIE AND FIND OUT **WHERE** THEY--

FWAM

MAKE A HOLE! INCOMING!

OH, MY GOD... RAPH?!

AMBUSH!

KSSH

AMBUSH?! WHO?!

RAPH, YOU'RE HURT!

FORGET ME. MASTER SPLINTER--

RAPH! WHERE?!

OVER HERE!

APRIL, GRAB THE MED KIT! BRING EVERYTHING!

NNNGG...

NNNGG...

"OH, GOD..."

... THIS IS **BAD.**

EASY... EASY...

DONNIE, HELP ME **CUT** THE CLOTHING AWAY AND CLEAR ALL THIS BLOOD.

I... I...

...I DON'T KNOW **WHERE** TO START.

SNAP **OUT** OF IT!

WE NEED TO FIND WHICH WOUND'S THE MOST **DANGEROUS.** FOCUS!

YEAH... OKAY... SORRY. I'M **GOOD.**

WHO THE **HELL** AMBUSHED YOU?

FOOT BASTARDS...

LARGE STRIKE TEAM. **JUMPED** US WHEN WE CAME OUTTA THE SEWERS.

LEO... NARDO...

REAR GUARD, SENSEI. MAKING SURE WE ALL GOT **CLEAR.**

**SCREW THAT!**

C'MON, RAPH--LET'S MAKE SURE **LEO** GOT CLEAR, TOO.

DAMN STRAIGHT. IT'S **BODY COUNT** TIME!

EVERY DAMN FOOT IN THIS CITY'S 'BOUT TO FIND OUT HOW BIG A **MISTAKE** THEY MADE TONIGHT.

STAND **DOWN,** RAPH--

--WE'RE **GOOD** FOR NOW. I TURNED THE **LAST** OF THEM BACK IN THE SUBWAY. LOOKS LIKE THEY MIGHT BE RUNNING TOWARDS THE EAST SIDE... THE **DOCKS** MAYBE.

WHAT ABOUT THE **TRUCE**, LEO? THOUGHT WE GOT **PAST** ALL THIS WITH THEM.

HONESTLY, I'M SURPRISED IT LASTED AS **LONG** AS IT DID.

**THAT'S** WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU MAKE DEALS WITH THE DEVIL!

HOW'S FATHER?

HE... HE'S LOST **SO MUCH** BLOOD. WE'RE DOING THE BEST WE CAN, BUT WITHOUT A **REAL** DOCTOR I...

...I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN **SAVE** HIM.

UNDERSTOOD.

CASEY, PULL THE **VAN** AROUND. I'LL CALL **DR. LEE.**

WAIT... WHAT?

I KNOW WE SHOULDN'T **MOVE** HIM, BUT...

NO, YOU'RE **RIGHT**, APRIL. WE NEED **HELP.**

THIS WAR... JUST... MATTER OF TIME. OROKU AGAINST HAMATO... ALWAYS.

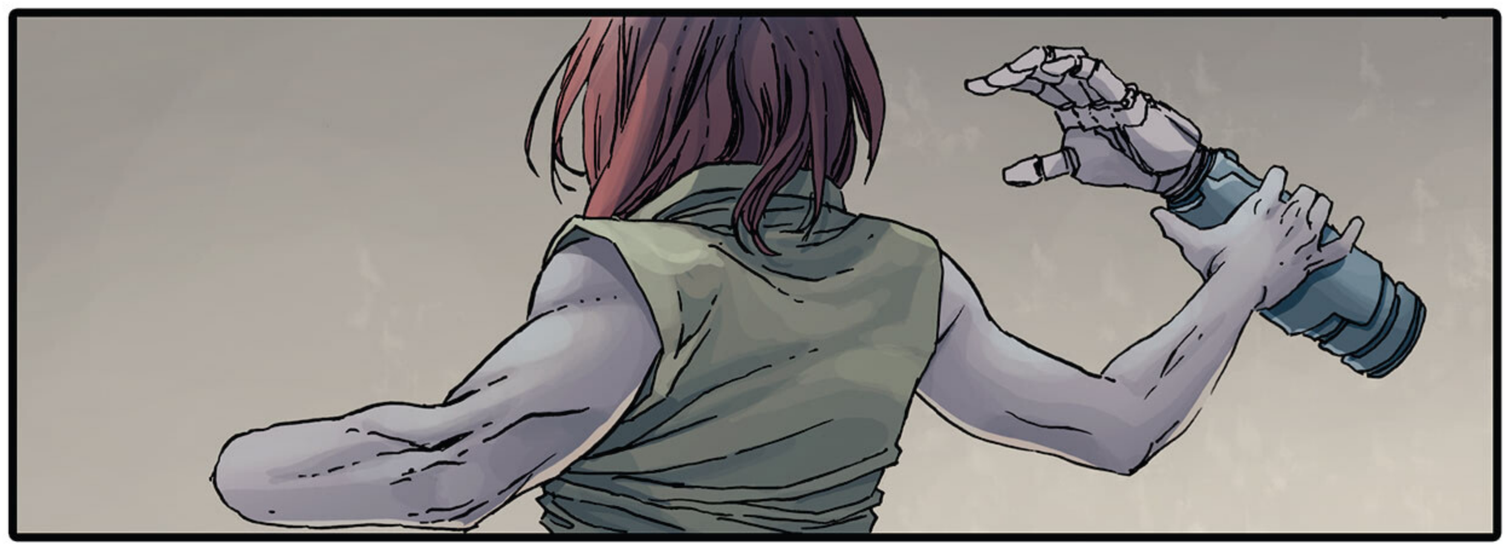
KARAI... TRYING TO END IT... ONCE AND FOR ALL.

SHHH... WE **GOT** YOU, SENSEI. IT'S OKAY.

HEY.

WHERE'S **RAPH?**

DAMMIT.



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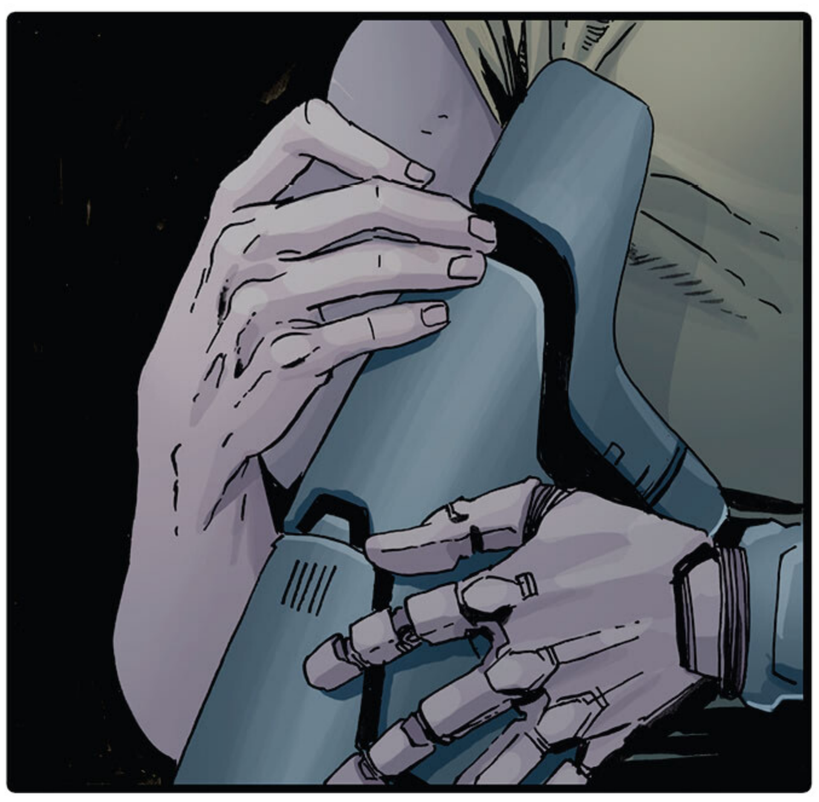
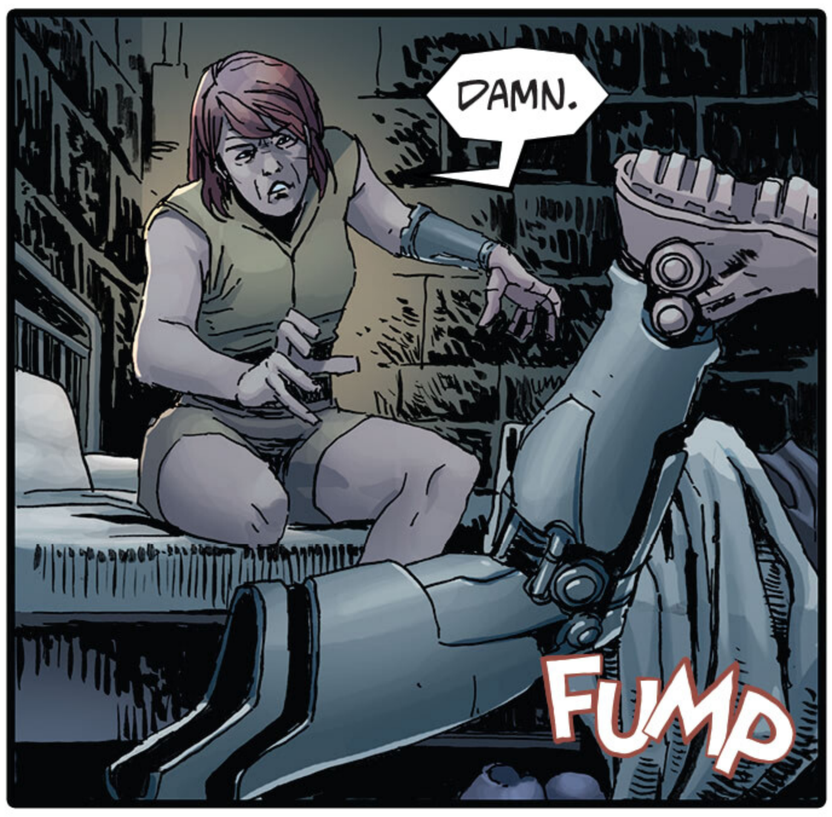
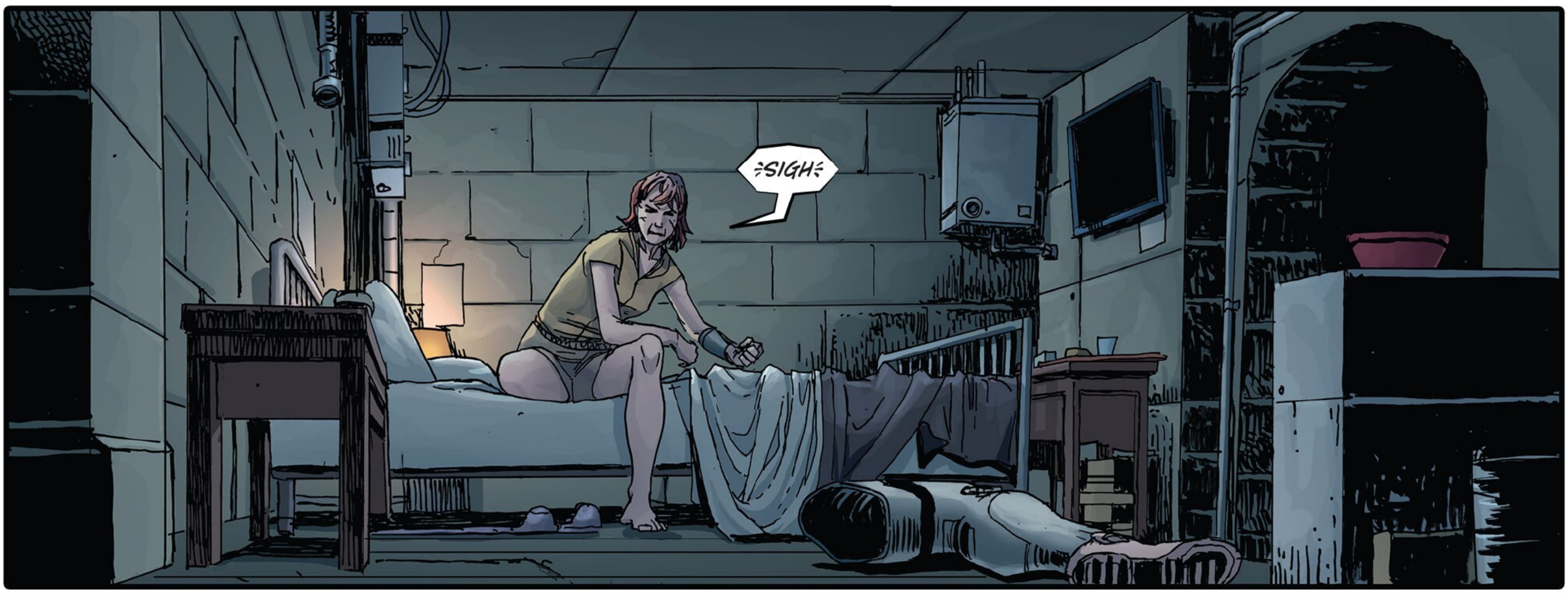



DAMN.
FUMP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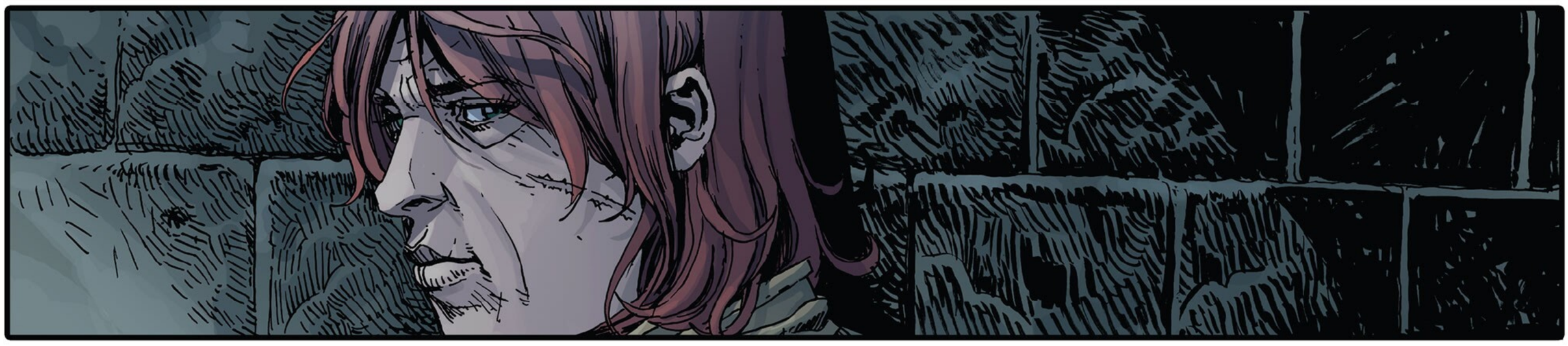
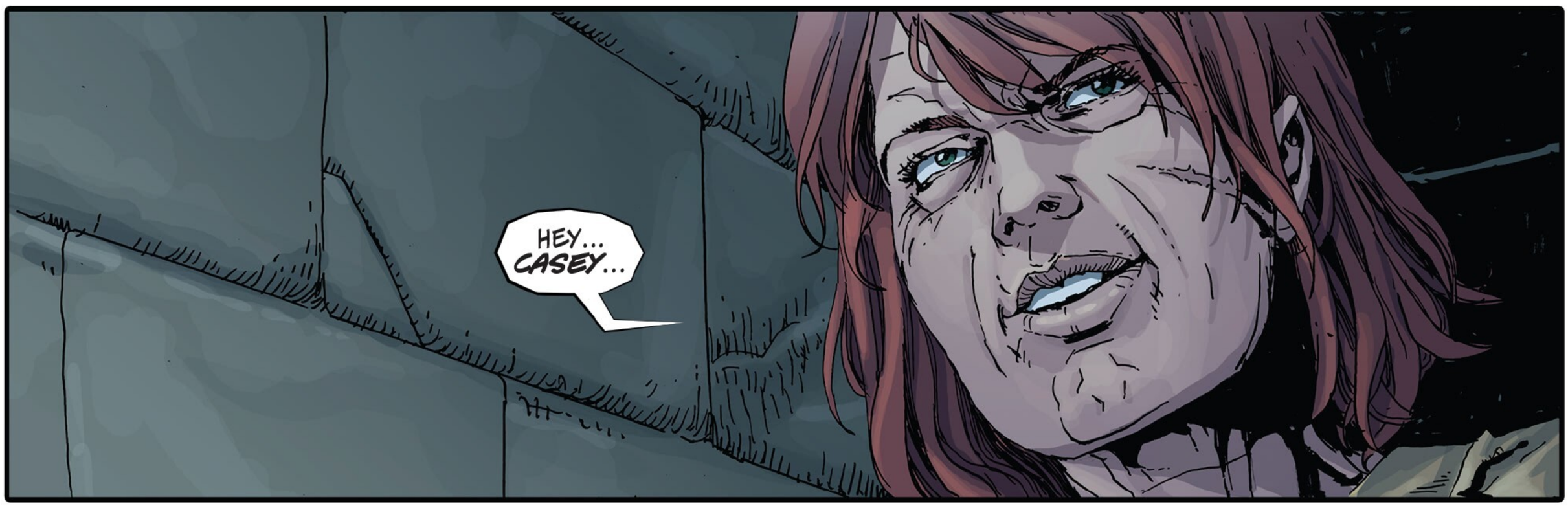



HEY... CASEY...

2
A LITTLE HELP HERE?

SHK

SKSSS

THIS WHOLE APRIL-STILL-BEING-ALIVE THING IS *NUTS*, HUH?

YEAH. HARD TO BELIEVE *ANYONE* SURVIVED THAT.

TALK ABOUT *MIRACLES*...

...RIGHT, MIKE?

UH... YEAH. YEAH.

RIGHT.

SHK

LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS THE *EXPLOSION*.

AND THEN...

PFFF

I WAS OUT OF IT PRETTY BAD WHEN I FINALLY CAME TO...

COULDN'T REMEMBER ***ANYTHING*** FOR DAYS.

I KINDA ***MISSED*** THAT ONE, I GUESS.

NO "KINDA" ABOUT IT, RAPH. AND WHY ***WAS*** THAT, HUH?

I DUNNO, DONNIE.

WOULDN'T BE BECAUSE HE FLIPPED OUT, RAN OFF, AND DID SOMETHING STUPIDLY ***HOTHEADED*** AGAIN, WOULD IT?

AND HOW MANY TIMES HAS MY STUPID HOTHEAD ***SAVED*** ALL YOUR ASSES, LEO?!

NOT ENOUGH.

WOOOO

WOOOOO

NEVER... ENOUGH.

YEAH? LEAST I DIDN'T TRY TO ***OFF MYSELF*** AT THE FIRST WHIFF OF FAILURE.

YOU STUPID, PATHETIC ***FOOL!***

YOU ***ALWAYS*** MAKE OUR ***ENTIRE*** LIFE ALL ABOUT ***YOU!***

I FOUGHT ***EVERY*** BATTLE YOU HAVE--EVEN THE IDIOTIC ONES ***YOU*** STARTED!

AND YOU ***STILL*** WANNA JUDGE ME?!

YOU KNEW WHAT ***MY*** MISSION WAS IN THE TOWER! A ***ONE-WAY TICKET*** FROM THE START!

FOR OUR ***FATHER***, FOR OUR ***FAMILY***, FOR OUR...

...HONOR.

NNG.

WOOOOOOO

LOOK, I SHOULD BE DEAD. THAT FALL SHOULD'VE **KILLED** ME, BUT...

...IT **DIDN'T.**

I'M STILL HERE... STILL ALIVE... TO **FIGHT.**

I LOST THE BATTLE, BUT THE **WAR** GOES ON.

WE'VE ALL HAD SO MUCH **STOLEN** FROM US.

NO MORE.

I **WILL** FINISH WHAT **WE** STARTED.

WHAT **MASTER SPLINTER** RAISED US TO DO.

THE LAST **OROKU**...

"...MUST DIE."

NYC AGGREGATIC

Subwa

ENTER

"WHOA..."

...YOU SEE THAT?

WHAT?

IT LOOKED LIKE--

"--NEVER MIND. THAT'D BE TOO CRAZY."

SNIFF SNIFF

BLOOD!

WHERE IS SHE?!

HUH?

WHERE'S KARAI?!

"IMBECILES!"

I GAVE YOU ONE SIMPLE COMMAND--KILL THE MUTANTS!

AND NOW YOU HAVE THE UTTER GALL TO RETURN HERE TO NURSE YOUR OWN PATHETIC WOUNDS AND WALLOW IN YOUR FAILURE?!

THIS WILL NOT STAND!

WE MUST FINISH WHAT WE HAVE STARTED.

THE TRUCE BETWEEN THE FOOT AND HAMATO CLANS HAS BEEN BROKEN. BLOOD HAS BEEN SPILLED...

"...AND THERE IS *NO TURNING BACK* NOW."

NNF!

SNAP

WHA--?

HRGKK!

GYAH!

RAHH!

"AND SO...

"...OUR FAILURE FINDS *US.*"

SO BE IT.

DESTROY THE BEAST!

BRING IT!

SENDIN' THESE WIMPS TO DO YOUR **DIRTY WORK**, HUH, KARAI?!

YOU ALREADY MADE THAT **MISTAKE** ONCE TONIGHT!

YOU AMBUSHED MY FAMILY!

KILLED MY FATHER!

ONLY ONE WAY THIS ENDS!

SO STOP HIDIN' BEHIND THESE SCRUBS AND WE'LL ***FINISH*** THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

YES...

...WE WILL!

FOOLISH *UNDISCIPLINED* BRUTE!

BRUTE?

YOU GOT *NO* IDEA!

FWAK

GUH!

ENOUGH!

MY SOLDIERS MAY HAVE FAILED TO TAKE YOUR HEAD, MUTANT...

CHNK

SHPP

GUH!

...BUT I WILL NOT!

YOU MISSED!

UNF!

MY TURN!

NO!

MICHELANGELO!

WHAT THE *HECK* ARE YOU DOING UP--

--YOU SHOULD STILL BE *RESTING!*

UHH... COULDN'T SLEEP SO I MADE SOME TEA. HOPE THAT'S OKAY?

OF COURSE, IT IS--THIS WAS *YOUR* KITCHEN WAY BEFORE I MOVED IN.

AND SORRY--JUST GOT *WORRIED* WHEN I DIDN'T FIND YOU IN BED.

THE TEA'S FROM WHEN *YOU* LIVED HERE.

HOPE IT'S *STILL* GOOD.

HEH.

HONESTLY, BEST CUP OF TEA I'VE HAD IN A *LONG* TIME.

CAF

BOST

ME? I RUN ON *HIGH-OCTANE* THESE DAYS.

SOMETIMES THERE'S JUST NOT ENOUGH *CAFFEINE* IN THE WORLD, YOU KNOW?

UM...

MY ARM?

UH... YEAH.

SORRY.

DON'T BE. GOT ONE JUST LIKE IT FOR A **LEG.**

SOUVENIRS FROM THE **LAST TIME** WE SAW EACH OTHER.

I'M **SO HAPPY** YOU'RE ALIVE, MIKEY.

I... UH, YEAH. **THANKS,** APRIL.

YOU, TOO.

ALL THIS TIME, I **THOUGHT...**

I KNOW. WE'VE GOT SOME **SERIOUS** CATCHING UP TO DO.

BUT **NOT** BEFORE WE GET SOME BREAKFAST IN US.

THESE EGGS ARE **REAL,** BY THE WAY--NOT THE SYNTHETIC CRAP WE'RE **USUALLY** STUCK WITH.

COURTESY OF THE **BLACK MARKET.**

CRACK

**FRESH** BATCH, TOO.

CAN'T LET SALMONELLA **FINISH** WHAT HIROTO COULDN'T.

WORD ON THE STREET IS YOU REALLY **RATTLED** HIS CAGE.

MAYBE.

BUT RATTLING CAGES **WASN'T** THE PLAN.

I'M SURE IT WASN'T.

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE **LUCKY** TO BE ALIVE.

YEAH... STILL TRYING TO **PROCESS** IT ALL.

THAT FALL WOULD'VE **KILLED** ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.

INSTEAD...

WELL, I'M NO **DONATELLO**, BUT IT DOESN'T TAKE A **GENIUS** TO SEE YOUR MUTATION HAS **PROGRESSED** OVER THE YEARS.

YOU'RE BIGGER... STRONGER. AND YOU'RE HEALING **AMAZINGLY** FAST.

NOT MY **HEAD**. EVERYTHING'S SO **FUZZY**...

STILL DON'T KNOW HOW I **GOT** HERE... **BACK** TO THE LAIR.

HOLD THAT THOUGHT.

**CASEY!**

**BREAK-FAST!**

WAIT-- **WHAT?**

CASEY'S STILL ALIVE, TOO?!

MICHELANGELO, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MY DAUGHTER...
...CASEY MARIE JONES.

WE KINDA *ALREADY* MET.

YOU WERE A LOT *LESS CONSCIOUS* AND A LOT *MORE BLOODY* AT THE TIME.

SWAK

THIS IS SO WEIRD. I'VE BEEN HEARIN' ABOUT YOU TURTLES ALL MY LIFE, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET TO *MEET* ONE OF YOU FOR REAL.

I OBVIOUSLY GOT THAT ALL *WRONG*, HUH?

CASEY?

HEH. YEP... THAT'S *ME.*

AND *YOU'RE* SUPPOSED TO BE THE *FUNNY ONE*, RIGHT?

LIKE I SAID... *LOTS* OF CATCHING UP TO DO.

WHAT IS *WRONG* WITH YOU?!

I SAID, SHOW ME A *DECENT FIGHT!*

KILL ME, COWARDS...

...OR I WILL HAVE *YOU* KILLED!

YES. THAT'S IT.

*HAI!*

FWUD

NNF!

SHMP

ERF!

FWAK

HM. EXCELLENT STRIKE.

ALMOST MASTERFUL.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU...

...THERE IS ONLY *ONE* MASTER!

KRAK

SUSH

THE LESSON HAS *ENDED*. CLEAN THIS MESS.

COME, *CAPTAIN FUKUDA*...

"...I WANT A *FULL* UPDATE."

HAS OUR LITTLE PROBLEM BEEN *SOLVED*, CAPTAIN?

NO, MASTER. THE ROGUE MUTANT HAS NOT *YET* BEEN LOCATED.

HM. DISAPPOINTING.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THOSE THINGS *SLINKED* THROUGH THE ALLEYS AND *ACROSS* THE ROOFTOPS OF THIS CITY WITH NEAR IMPUNITY.

THEY EVEN HAD THE UTTER AUDACITY TO BRAND THEMSELVES "NINJA"... THOUGH THE TRUTH WAS FAR *LESS* IMPRESSIVE THAN THAT.

THE CREATURE IS FEARFULLY SKULKING IN THE SHADOWS, NO DOUBT, WHICH MEANS A *SHIFT* IN TACTICS IS IN ORDER, DEAR CAPTAIN.

A SHIFT, MASTER?

YES. I WANT ALL OUR TROOPS ENGAGED IN A *FULL CRACKDOWN* OF THE CITY. INSIDE AND OUT.

AND ONCE WE CAPTURE THE FILTHY CREATURE, WE WILL *DESTROY* IT...

...WITH EXTREME, *PUBLIC* PREJUDICE.

GO NOW, CAPTAIN. SEE TO MY ORDERS. BUT REMEMBER--

--YOU ARE NEWLY RAISED TO YOUR RANK IN THE WAKE OF *CAPTAIN IKUSA'S* FAILURE, SO I WILL ALLOW FOR YOUR INABILITY TO LOCATE THE BEAST JUST THIS ONCE.

THE PRICE FOR FAILING ME AGAIN WILL BE THE *SAME* AS YOUR PREDECESSOR'S.

MAN, MOM--

=BURP= SORRY.

--AFTER TWO HOURS OF **KENDO**...

...THAT SURE **HIT** THE SPOT.

YEAH. I ALMOST FORGOT WHAT A **REAL MEAL** WAS LIKE. THANKS, APRIL.

YOU'RE WELCOME. WE DO OKAY, **ALL** THINGS CONSIDERED.

JUST DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING **FANCIER** IN ROCK BOTTOM.

**ROCK BOTTOM?**

JUST A NICKNAME. NEW YORK'S **SPLIT** INTO THREE DISTRICTS--TOP, MIDDLE, AND BOTTOM.

ROCK BOTTOM'S THE OLD **STREET** LEVEL...

...**OUR** PEOPLE.

THEN THERE'S THE **REST** OF US.

THE **REST** OF US?

ROCK BOTTOM'S THE **BATTLEFIELD**, AND THE REST OF US **UNDERGROUND**...

...WE'RE THE **RESISTANCE.**

WHICH WE'LL TELL HIM **ALL** ABOUT, **AFTER** HE GETS MORE REST.

MAYBE YOU CAN GRAB HIM SOME **CLEAN LINEN**, HM?

UH, SURE... OKAY.

COME ON, MICHELANGELO. IF THERE'S **ONE THING** I KNOW ABOUT MY MOM...

"...SHE'S NOT GONNA TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER."

SO... KENDO, HUH?

YEAH--BEEN DOIN' IT SINCE I WAS LITTLE. OTHER STUFF, TOO.

HARD NOT TO...

...WHEN YOU GROW UP IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THIS.

BLOWS MY MIND TO BE STANDIN' HERE WITH YOU. I HEARD SO MANY STORIES, AND MOM SHOWED ME SOME OF THE OLD PHOTOS.

YOU GUYS WERE PRACTICALLY LIKE STORYBOOK HEROES TO ME.

I EVEN TRIED TO LEARN AS MUCH MARTIAL ARTS AS I COULD... ON MY OWN MOSTLY.

SPENT A LOT OF TIME WATCHIN' OLD TRAINING VIDEOS AND LOTS OF READING.

THE NINJA WARRIOR PART?

THAT ALWAYS GETS ME PUMPED.

HMM... NOT SURE IF "PUMPED" IS THE GOAL.

WELL, I KNOW SOME OF THE HISTORY, TOO. THINGS LIKE BUSHIDO...

...AND SEPPUKU.

THESE... ARE ALL VERY **PERSONAL** TO ME. THANK YOU.

SURE. ONCE I SAW WHAT... ER... **WHO** YOU WERE, I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE **ANYTHING** BEHIND...

...CONSIDERIN' WHAT YOU WERE ABOUT TO **DO**.

I UNDERSTAND **WHY**, YOU KNOW. THE **HONOR** OF IT.

DID... DID YOU SAY ANYTHING TO YOUR **MOM**?

NO. NOTHING.

THINGS'VE BEEN PRETTY **ROUGH** THE LAST FEW YEARS, SO TO SEE A LITTLE BIT OF **HOPE** IN HER EYES AGAIN, WELL...

THANKS. AGAIN.

ACTUALLY, YOU CAN THANK ME BY TELLIN' ME MORE ABOUT **THIS**.

MY **JAPANESE** AIN'T THE GREATEST, BUT I UNDERSTAND ENOUGH TO KNOW THIS IS **SPECIAL**. HANDWRITTEN LIKE A **JOURNAL**, BUT...

...LIKE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL KINDS OF **MARTIAL ARTS STYLES** AND **TECHNIQUES** AND IMPORTANT **LIFE LESSONS**, RIGHT?

YEAH. SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

IT WAS MY **FATHER'S**.

CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

WHERE HAVE YOU **BEEN** ALL THIS TIME?

YEAH. THAT.

AFTER ALL THE **BAD STUFF** THAT HAPPENED, IT WAS **TOO MUCH** TO HANDLE.

SO...

"...I JUST STARTED *WALKING.*

"INTO THE *MOUNTAINS.* A KID FROM THE SEWERS OF LOWER MANHATTAN STRAIGHT INTO THE WILD.

"BAD IDEA.

"I'D SEEN PHOTOS OF SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS... BUT NEVER *SET FOOT* ON ONE. AND BEING COLD-BLOODED...

"...I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.

"SO, I FOUND A PLACE TO MEET MY *END.*

"DAYS, A WEEK... MAYBE LONGER. I DON'T KNOW ***HOW LONG*** I LAID THERE...

"... BUT MY MUTANT BODY WOULD ***NOT*** DIE.

"I STARTED TO HEAR... VOICES. TELLING ME THAT MY ***DESTINY*** WAS INCOMPLETE.

"THAT I COULDN'T ***LEAVE*** YET.

"EVENTUALLY IT GOT WARMER, AND THE MOUNTAINS PROVIDED SUSTENANCE AND SOLITUDE...

"... A TIME TO LOOK ***DEEP*** IN MY SOUL FOR ANSWERS.

"I READ AND RE-READ FATHER'S BOOK, LOOKING FOR SOME KIND OF ***BALANCE***... MAYBE EVEN A ***FINAL PEACE.***

"I SPENT YEARS ALONE... THINKING THIS WAS WHERE I WAS ***SUPPOSED*** TO BE, LIKE A STUPID REWARD OR DESERVED PUNISHMENT... OR SOMETHING.

"BUT THAT'S ***NOT*** THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

"THE ***REAL*** WORLD FOUND ME AGAIN, AND I ALMOST LET IT ***TAKE*** ME."

<MONSTER!>

<FREAK! ***KILL*** IT!>

"I WELCOMED THE PAIN AT FIRST. AT LEAST I FELT ***SOMETHING*** AFTER ALL THAT TIME.

"THEN I SAW THE LOOKS ON THEIR FACES--LAUGHING--TAKING A LIFE ***JUST*** TO TAKE A LIFE. FOR FUN.

"NO HONOR.

"THAT'S WHEN I GOT MAD...

"***REALLY*** MAD.

"WE WERE RAISED WITH RESPECT AND HONOR.

"TRAINED FROM ***BIRTH*** FOR REDEMPTION FOR OUR FAMILY.

"***THAT*** WAS MY DESTINY... ON THE BATTLEFIELD...

"TO THE ***END.***"

"FATHER'S *BOOK* WAS THE PATH.

"TO LEARN AND MASTER *ALL* FORMS OF MARTIAL ARTS.

"TO ADAPT TO *EVERY* CHALLENGE... *EVERY* FORM OF COMBAT.

"I WAS THE *LAST* OF MY CLAN. MASTERLESS.

"*RONIN.*

"AND IT WAS UP TO *ME* TO RESTORE OUR FAMILY'S HONOR."

"MY TRAINING REACHED ITS END.

"THERE WOULD BE ***NO PEACE*** UNTIL I FULFILLED MY DESTINY.

BERNINI ITALY

"IT WAS TIME TO COME HOME TO ***FACE*** IT..."

...TO COMPLETE MY MASTER'S MISSION. KILL THE LAST OROKU.

AND THIS LAST PAGE...

...WHAT'S IT MEAN?

NO PEACE

MEANS I STILL GOT WORK TO DO.

GOOD. 'CAUSE MY CREW'S GONNA HELP YOU.

NO. I APPRECIATE THE OFFER.

BUT I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANYONE ELSE GETTING KILLED BECAUSE OF ME.

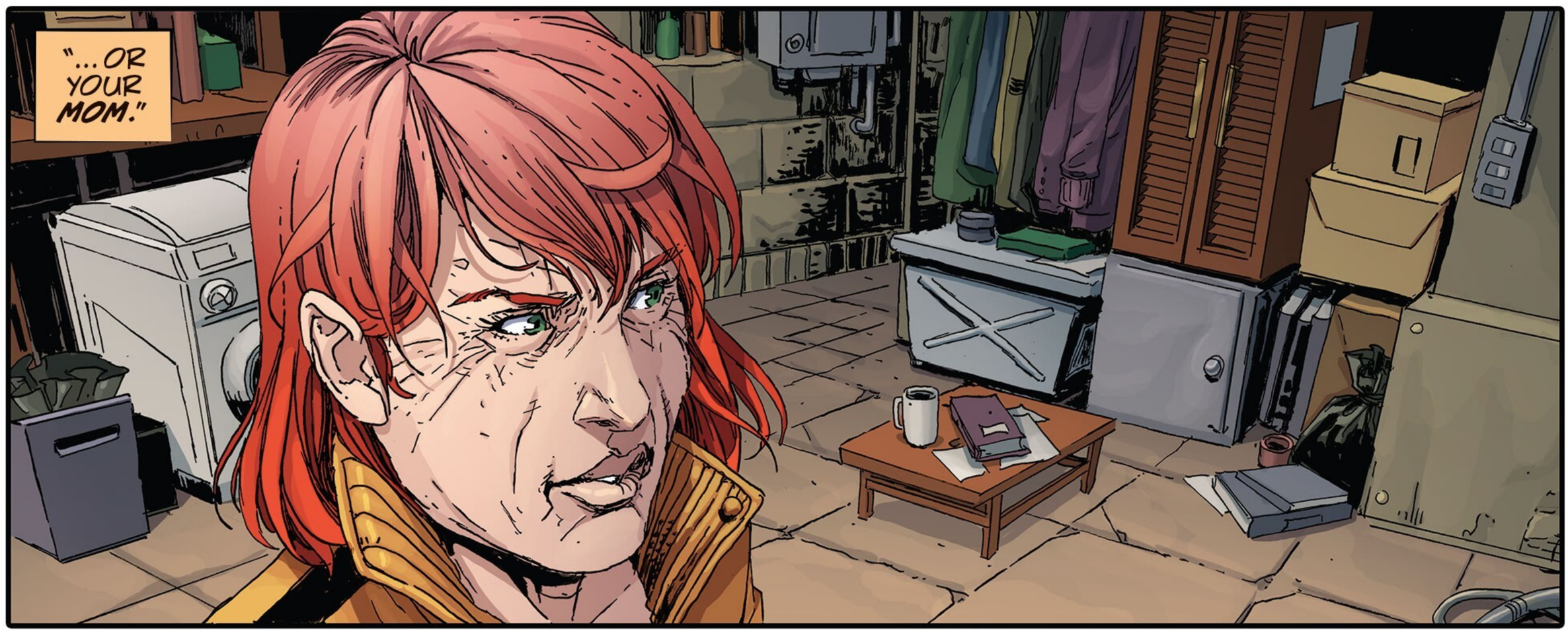
WELL, TOO BAD, 'CAUSE I WASN'T ASKING. YOU WOULDN'T EVEN BE STANDIN' HERE IF IT WASN'T FOR US.

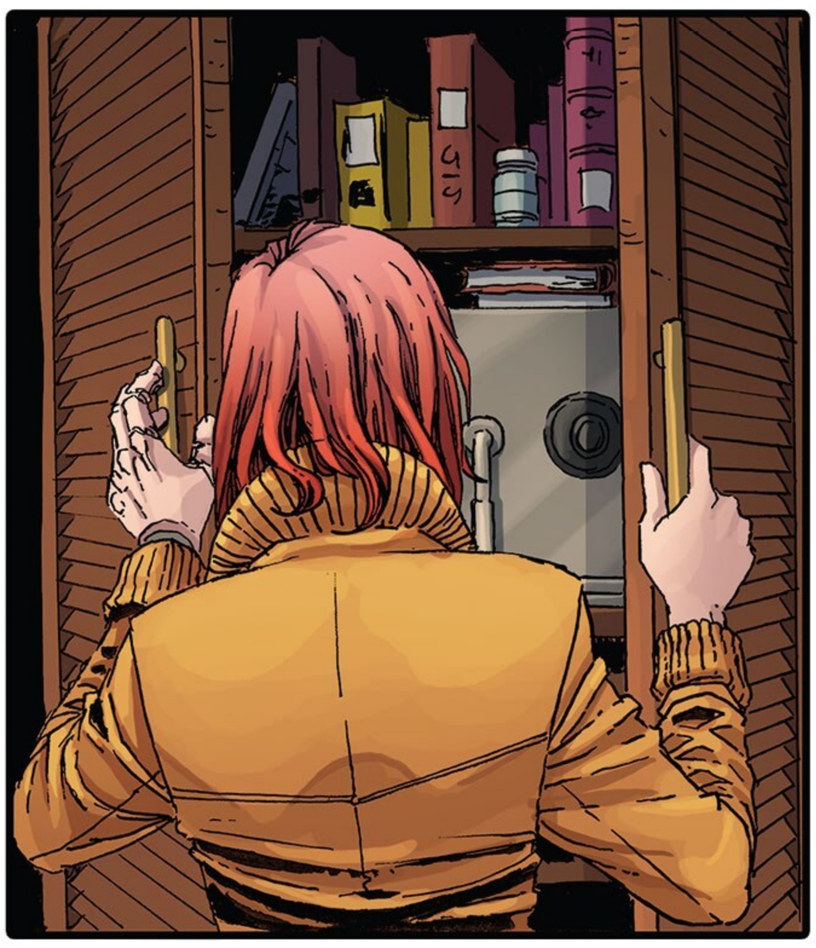
WE GOT TROUBLE COMIN' NOW THAT YOU STIRRED THINGS UP, SO IF YOU DON'T WANT HELP TAKIN' OUT HIROTO, THEN STAND IN LINE.

HEH.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

JUST TRYING TO DECIDE IF YOU'RE MORE LIKE YOUR DAD...


"...OR YOUR MOM."



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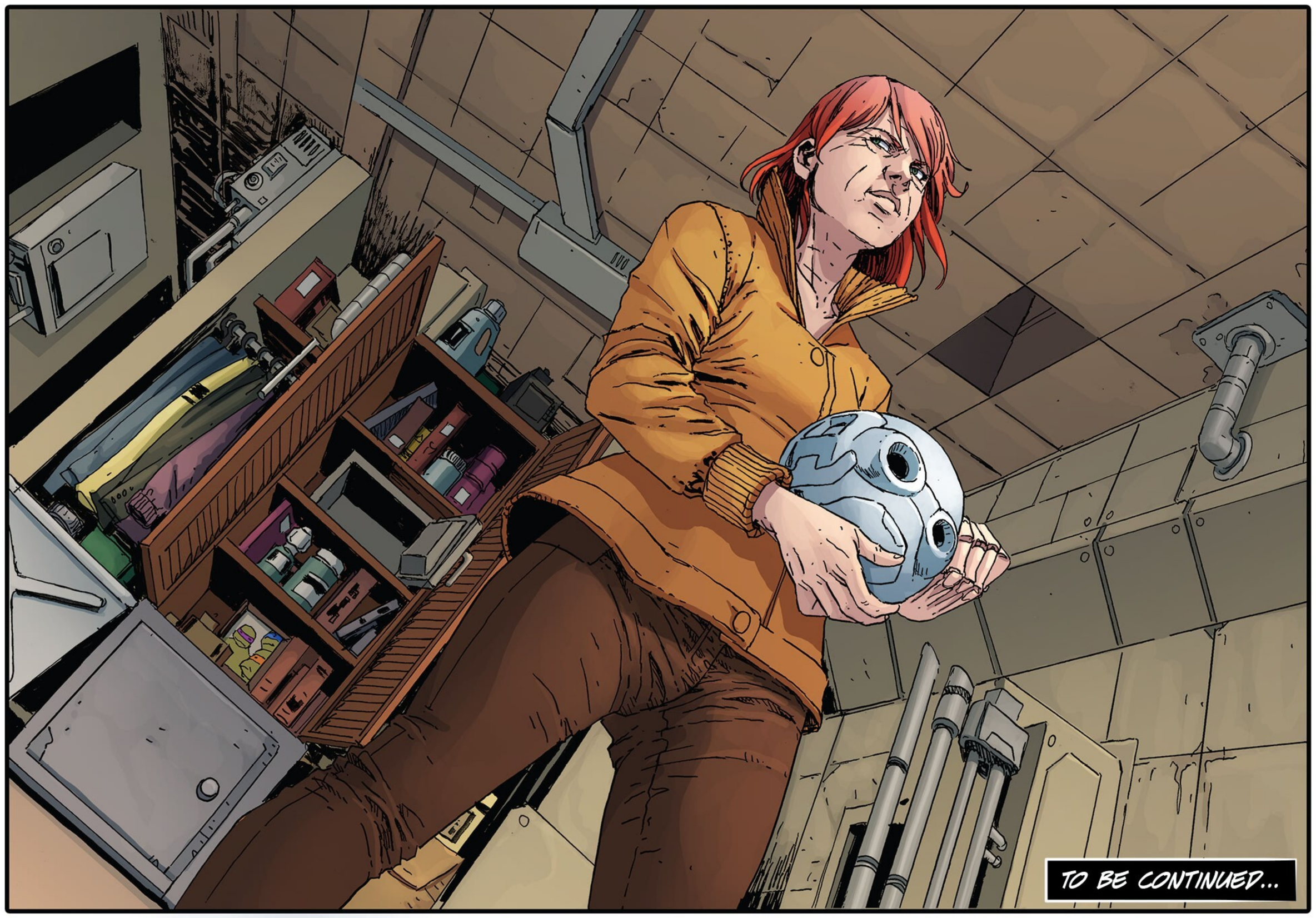
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NEXT ISSUE

# TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

## THE IDW COLLECTION

**THE ACCLAIMED SERIES IN OVERSIZED DELUXE EDITIONS.**
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PAY ATTENTION, CHILDREN...

...THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET *INTERESTING*.

*TRAITOR!*

*FALSE KING!*

*COWARD!*

*KILL HIM!*

*COME* THEN, SPAWNS OF PERDITION...

KNOW YOUR BETTER!

FOOLS! YOU DARE CALL ME CRAVEN?

STAB

YOU, WHO HAVE FALLEN SO LOW...

...AND CONTINUE TO FALL!

WHILE I HAVE FACED THE DESTROYER.

WHILE I HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE DRAGON.

AND WHILE I CONTINUE TO...

...RISE!

GUH!

SHE'S *QUITE BEAUTIFUL*, IS SHE NOT...

... MY *PRECOCIOUS SISTER?*

SO... THE *RAT KING*.

YOU DON'T SEEM *SURPRISED* TO SEE ME.

THAT IS BECAUSE I AM *NOT*.

KITSUNE HAS *TOLD* ME OF YOUR ANNOYING PENCHANT FOR APPEARING UNANNOUNCED AND UNINVITED.

DID YOU *HEAR* THAT, CHILDREN? IT SEEMS I'VE BECOME PREDICTABLY UNPREDICTABLE.

HOW DISAPPOINTING.

*YOU*, HOWEVER--TALK ABOUT SURPRISES. THE *WAY* YOU HANDLED THOSE HELL-SPAWN JUST NOW?

QUITE IMPRESSIVE.

HELL-SPAWN? *HOW* DO YOU--

THERE ARE FEW REALMS I CANNOT VISIT OR CONTROL, SHREDDER, WHETHER BY INVITATION OR OTHERWISE. THE *DREAM-REALM* INCLUDED.

"ANNOYING PENCHANT," REMEMBER?

YES, WELL... WHATEVER YOU BELIEVE YOU OBSERVED, IT WAS MERELY A *DREAM*, AS YOU SAID.

WAS IT?

IT SEEMED MORE LIKE AN *AFFIRMATION* TO ME.

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